BLUE WAR

I remember when I first started in the Navy during the Second World War. I was a midshipman, had just joined the U79 and was about to go on my first mission around the isles of the Pacific Ocean (which, contrary to its name, was the scene of severe fighting).

Before meeting the 35 other members of the crew, I decided to carry out a detailed visit of the submarine, accompanied by the first officer.

ROOM 1:
Control/Operations Room with all necessary controls: Speed, course, fuel and electricity reserves, oxygen reserves, breakdown alarm, radio, depth, distance from the seabed, etc.

ROOM 2:
Radar Room where two men constantly watch the radar when on the surface and the sonar when diving. They establish the position of any ship in the vicinity. Locating other ships very precisely allows us to prepare for attack. This is where I learnt that the sonar is the only way to locate submerged submarines.

ROOM 3:
Here the log is updated daily, detailing all events, in particular the type and number of ships destroyed.

I think of all those ranks I will have to reach before becoming a Commander. Each successful mission will bring me nearer to this dream which started in my childhood. BE CAREFUL of piloting errors or wrong destruction of an allied ship which will bring you down several ranks.

ROOM 4:
Records Room where I can check the records on type and characteristics of various ships patrolling the area (cruises, destroyer, aircraft carrier, battleships, submarines and supply cargo-ships).

Knowing these characteristics perfectly will allow me to recognise easily any ship, in order to choose an easy target presenting very little risk.

ROOM 5:
Engine Room, with a detailed report of the areas which could explode and thus endanger the crew.

Watch the means of propulsion, the electronic equipment, the safety equipment, and the reserves.

ROOM 6:
Map showing the islands in the area as well as the ships located on the radar. When the U79 goes outside the boundaries of the area shown on the map, the next map will come up automatically.

ROOM 7:
Radio Room to receive any messages from base. A message tells me to make a precise note of the mission code.

ROOM 8:
Main menu accessible at any time to allow me to choose any control required.

Starboard – Right
Portside – Left, etc.

After this visit I realise that we have here a formidable offensive weapon, thanks to its advanced electronic equipment, its dual propulsion system – diesel and electric – its high speed (20 knots on the surface and 15 knots when submerged) its periscope which can be used up to a depth of 4 metres and its torpedoes (to be used in two's every 12 seconds).

Our sailing time of 23.30 is getting nearer, the General Staff radioes the mission code essential to return to base. Standing in the control room, I give the first orders.

Start up the diesel engines (D), gradual acceleration. I then consult the maps to examine the area and the position of the located ships.

Good, very good. The small dot in the North West seems totally isolated and is going forward slowly, it is an ideal target. The radio officer warns me of an incoming message, the Headquarters warn me that 4 ships have been located in my area, with no submarine around. It all seems perfect.

I go back to the control room: we go to portside (←): at 320°: I turn on the engines which propel the ship to 20 knots. I would like to reach the target in the early morning to increase the surprise effect. I check the map: –6° of correction to starboard (→).

A few hours later we have reached our target, the crew are all at their posts. I order the starting up of the electrical engines to decrease the noise and to be ready to dive at any time if necessary. Dive to 3 metres and keep to that level.

The atmosphere is tense in the control room. I search for the target. Here comes a cruiser. It gets nearer and larger, it seems a perfect target to start the battle. We must approach it sideways .....

Fire the first two torpedoes!!! (T). The torpedoes have been fired and move slowly towards the ships. Unfortunately it is difficult to fire in such heavy seas and the torpedoes pass behind and miss the ships.

The crew of the target ship have located us and are firing at us.

I have time to fire another two torpedoes but I have to be more precise and modify the aim in view of the speed of the target and of the heavy seas. I have to aim for the bow head of the cruiser; prepare torpedo tubes 1 & 2 and FIRE!!!

The group of torpedoes speed like a shark towards the target. The U79 dives very quickly. All silently count the seconds and watch the foam. The blow seemed muffled, far away and insignificant but the men knew when they saw the RED COLUMNS that it was a direct hit.

The ship's superstructures above the point of impact are dislocated, together with the bridge, a fire starts up and a thick smoke envelops the ship. The ship stops immediately and leans to starboard and sinks in at the bow.

After two minutes the sea becomes calm again forgetting the tragedy that has just occurred.

Check the batteries : OK
Oxygen reserves : OK

The alarm shows that the ship has been hit by the firing, Room 4 – I realise that it is the radio. I remember that a friendly ship is patrolling the area. It is equipped to carry out repairs and supply energy and torpedoes.

We surface to complete the oxygen reserves and use the diesel engines to restart the batteries.

I remember the pleasure of that victory.

A few days later we see a new target. I think very quickly, working out the best angle of attack and correcting my calculations constantly. The hunter's instinct is awakened in me, but never has the hunt been so difficult. The storm is receding but the seas are heavy and the small submarine is difficult to control. Shooting in those conditions, on moving targets, is like trying to harpoon 3 whales speeding along. Being so near to the target also means that we could be hit by the explosion of our own torpedoes.

Nevermind! We cannot miss such an opportunity!

I raise my voice! We are near to the enemy; as soon as we have fired, dive to 6 metres and stay there.

Ready? FIRE!

The submarine spits out its two deadly torpedoes and dives.

The alarm lights up. To dive in diesel is an expensive mistake.

The submarine stops in its tracks, the engines stop and take in water. I start up the pumps (P) to empty out the water and I turn on the electric engines.

The engines propel the ship slowly and we continue to dive. Suddenly an extraordinary shock shakes the submarine which hits the ship. The crew and I dive into the depths of the sea and here stops a mission which had started with so much glory.

Fortunately it is only a game and the mission can start again with a more experienced midshipman.

LOADING INSTRUCTIONS
ATARI ST
Insert DISK 1, turn on machine. When screen prompts, insert DISK 2, and press the SPACE BAR.